

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (EXCERPT)
Act 442 of 1976

15.234 Fee; waiver or reduction; affidavit; deposit; calculation of costs; limitation; provisions inapplicable to certain public records.

Sec. 4. (1) A public body may charge a fee for a public record search, the necessary copying of a public record for inspection, or for providing a copy of a public record. Subject to subsections (3) and (4), the fee shall be limited to actual mailing costs, and to the actual incremental cost of duplication or publication including labor, the cost of search, examination, review, and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information as provided in section 14. A search for a public record may be conducted or copies of public records may be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge if the public body determines that a waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because searching for or furnishing copies of the public record can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public. A public record search shall be made and a copy of a public record shall be furnished without charge for the first \$20.00 of the fee for each request to an individual who is entitled to information under this act and who submits an affidavit stating that the individual is then receiving public assistance or, if not receiving public assistance, stating facts showing inability to pay the cost because of indigency.

(2) A public body may require at the time a request is made a good faith deposit from the person requesting the public record or series of public records, if the fee authorized under this section exceeds \$50.00. The deposit shall not exceed 1/2 of the total fee.

(3) In calculating the cost of labor incurred in duplication and mailing and the cost of examination, review, separation, and deletion under subsection (1), a public body may not charge more than the hourly wage of the lowest paid public body employee capable of retrieving the information necessary to comply with a request under this act. Fees shall be uniform and not dependent upon the identity of the requesting person. A public body shall utilize the most economical means available for making copies of public records. A fee shall not be charged for the cost of search, examination, review, and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information as provided in section 14 unless failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the public body because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and the public body specifically identifies the nature of these unreasonably high costs. A public body shall establish and publish procedures and guidelines to implement this subsection.

(4) This section does not apply to public records prepared under an act or statute specifically authorizing the sale of those public records to the public, or if the amount of the fee for providing a copy of the public record is otherwise specifically provided by an act or statute.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1988, Act 99, Imd. Eff. Apr. 11, 1988;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997.

Constitutionality: The disclosure of public records under the freedom of information act impartially to the general public for the incremental cost of creating the record is not a granting of credit by the state in aid of private persons and does not justify nondisclosure on the theory that the information is proprietary information belonging to a public body. *Kestenbaum v Michigan State University*, 414 Mich 510; 417 NW2d 1102 (1982).

Popular name: Act 442

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